

Stone House
.2 mile southwest of State
Route 687 (Ross Road)
Lexington vicinity
Rockbridge County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-899

HABS
VA,
82-128.V,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

STONE HOUSE

HABS No. VA-899

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4-

Name of Structure: Stone House

State: Virginia County: Rockbridge Town or vicinity: Lexington

Street Address or Location: .2 mile southwest of State Route 687 (Ross Road)

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Paxton Jr., Box 1155, Lexington, Va.

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Paxton Jr. Present Use: dwelling

Brief Statement of Significance: House built by Zachariah Johnston, Revolutionary War officer, associate of Thos. Jefferson in Virginia General Assembly and member of Virginia Convention of 1788 which ratified the Federal Constitution. Letters in existence to Johnston from Jefferson, George Mason, John Marshall and James Monroe

Original and subsequent owners: Part of original Borden grant was conveyed in 1742 to Joseph Lapsley (Johnston heirs still have deed) and conveyed in 1792 to Zachariah Johnston. Johnston also acquired property from James McDowell and his farm totaled 738 acres. From him property passed by inheritance to his son Thomas Johnston, from Thomas to his son James Johnston and from him to his children who were the last by that name to live in the house. It then passed by inheritance in 1964 to the present owner, M. W. Paxton Jr., a direct descendant of the builder. Some of the original furniture has remained in the house to the present time.

Date of erection: 1797 (stone in house gives date) Architect: unknown

Builder, suppliers, etc.: John Spear's name and mark appear on stone between chimneys, indicating that he was probably the stone mason

Notes on known alterations and additions: House restored in 1965-66 by present owners. Architect was Thomas Craven of Johnson, Craven & Gibson, Charlottesville, Va. Prior to that the house had undergone remarkably little change. Only major change was joining stone kitchen to main block with frame hyphen and addition of porch along length of this wing, probably about 100 years ago.

Primary and unpublished sources of information: Original letters from Jefferson etc. to Johnston in possession of family. Other family papers and family Bible in possession of M. W. Paxton Sr. Old glass negative in possession of M. W. Paxton Jr.

Source of information on recent structural changes to house was Lee Moore, who lived and worked for Johnstone ("e" added to name by last generation) family for 40 years and still lives nearby.

Secondary and published sources: Virginia Historical Collections, vol. IX, New Series, "The History of the Virginia Convention of 1788," by Hugh Blair Grigsby gives an account of Johnston's role in the convention. (Published by Virginia Historical Society, 1890)

"Zachariah Johnston of Augusta and Rockbridge Counties and His Times," by M. W. Paxton, vol. 5, Proceedings of the Rockbridge Historical Society.

Prepared by: M. W. Paxton Jr.

Date: February 1, 1969

See also: Lyle, Royster, Jr. and Simpson, Pamela. The Architecture of Historic Lexington. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977.

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GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural interest and merit: This is one of the larger and more refined of the stone houses built in Rockbridge County. The period of stone house building ended here shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century.

Condition of fabric: very good

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

Number of stories: two

Number of bays: five

Over-all dimensions: main house - 47 x 33 wing (one story) - 41 x 21

Layout--shape: rectangular stone main block joined by frame hyphen to one story bldg.

Foundations: limestone, 20" thick

Wall construction, finish and color: limestone with jack arches above window and door openings. When mortar was pointed up, white mortar with yellow sand was found to match old mortar.

Structural system, framing: Each floor suspended independently on oak logs running width of house. On main floor and top floor a beam also runs length of house. Interior partitions are constructed with 4 x 4 atudding. Roof is supported by hand-hewn, pegged beams.

Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: None of porches are original. Front porch, measuring 14 x 9 was built about 1930 and has heavy chamfered wood posts and A roof. Small A roof porch on northeast side built a few years earlier. Long porch running length of wing believed to have been built about 100 years ago when a separate stone kitchen was joined to main block. Small stone stoop at rear of main block built in 1935. Stoop and porch on back of wing added in 1965-66.

Chimneys: Main block has three chimneys, wing has two. Five of six fireplaces in main block are working (sixth flue used for furnace). Large fireplace in wing working. Other fireplace in wing blocked up in 1965-66.

Openings - doorways and doors: House has 10 outside doorways on main floor plus basement entrance. Original inside doorways about 6'2" high. Doors have flat panels on one side and raised panels on other (six panels).

Openings - windows and shutters: House has 33 windows, four in basement, 14 on first floor, 12 on second floor and three on third floor. First floor window sashes are 9 panes over 9, second and third floor sashes are 9 over 6. Some old glass still existing. Nine-pane sash measures (lower) 36 x 29. Shutters were added many years ago.

Roof - shape, covering: Roof, with rather high pitch, now covered with tin, originally with wood shingles.

Cornice, eaves: Cornice on main block is classical with modillions and dentils. A scalloped apron is applied to the long porch.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

Floor Plans (by floor): Basement under main block is all one room. First floor center hall is flanked by one room, width of house, on left; and two rooms on right. Kitchen and hall, with bay, in wood hyphen (gutted in restoration); original stone kitchen in wing now used as dining room (this room had been abandoned and had to be gutted in restoration). Second floor central hall is flanked by master bedroom on left and two bedrooms on right. Attic divided in 1965-66 with half being used as playroom and other half for storage.

Stairways: Stairway in main hall rises in two stages with landing above door at rear of hall. Has simple turned spindles and simple turned balusters with wooden painted handrail.

Flooring: Random width $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch pine, no subflooring.

Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster. Unornamented wainscoting on main floor is poplar. Very similar wainscoting and woodwork features are to be found in several nearby houses of same period, including Tuckaway and Little Stone.

Doorways and doors: Original interior doorways about 6'2" high. Doors are six panel, raised on one side and flat on other side. All are original except where new doorways added in restoration.

Decorative features and trim: Pilasters in main hall are distinctive feature; fluted pilasters on pedestals with capital composed of a cavetto, an oval low, filet and dentils. The necking is plain, without fluting.

Notable hardware: Original iron box locks on doors have been repaired and are working. Several sets of original hinges still in use, including strap hinges on pentles.

Heating: Central heating installed in 1965-66 with natural gas fired boiler and radiators. Six fireplaces working.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Orientation (by compass reading) and general setting: House, situated on low knoll, faces southeast. Present owners retain only 10 acres of original farm. The acreage fronts on a tract owned by Lexington Golf Club on which golf course is to be expanded with additional nine holes.

Outbuildings: Double outbuilding, built in 1928 in line with rear line of house, contained chicken house, woodshed and garage. Scalloped apron on building matches that on long porch. Grainery built in 1934. Old stable burned several years ago. Large barn now on property purchased by golf club. Spring house and loom house once situated northwest of house, razed some years ago, but their approximate sites are known by present owner.

Landscaping and walks, enclosures: Some fine old walnut, locust, sycamore and maple trees around house. Double outbuildings connected to house in 1965-66 with solid, high wood fences cut, on top, in a design which is reverse of scalloped apron on outbuildings. Old granite curbing for driveway found in Lynchburg. Post lamps made in 1966 by a New York artisan.

Prepared by: M. W. Paxton Jr., with assistance
of Nat Neblett of firm of J.
Everett Fauber (AIA), Lynchburg,
Va.

Date: February 1, 1969

Edited for HABS by Druscilla J. Null
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